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Transmission access is just a PC away

Bonneville Power Administration

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Editor's note: You can reach BPA's Transmission System Information Network home page at <http://www.transmission.bpa.gov> on the Internet, but by FERC rule, you must register to go beyond the information pages. Currently, it takes less than a day to register. You may also tap into news and information on the BPA home page at <http://www.bpa.gov>.

PORTLAND, Ore. - Power utilities and brokers can now tap into the nation's largest power grid through their computers. The Bonneville Power Administration yesterday became the first public agency in the United States to provide power users direct access to power transmission information through the Internet.

"If the system works out, consumers should see lower electricity prices, thanks to open access to the grid and information about it," said System Operations chief Darrel VanCoevinger

The system is called the transmission system information network - or TSIN. For now, BPA's TSIN lets registered users schedule power on five large circuits likely to face the greatest demand: two groups of 500-kilovolt lines between Oregon and California, another between Washington and Canada, one linking Washington and Montana and a web of lines between eastern Washington and southern Idaho.

A spring 1995 proposal from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission requires all utilities to develop or take part in a TSIN if they own or control facilities used to transmit electric energy in interstate commerce. Networks must be in place by Oct. 1, 1996.

FERC wants utilities to split their transmission businesses from their power businesses. Transmission systems would become open highways, available for anyone to deliver power. Wholesale power businesses and customers would have open access through those highways.

That would mean competition for power in the wholesale market - and lower prices for customers.

"We weren't first in the West with a TSIN on the Internet," VanCoevinger said, "but we are the first public agency in the United States to do so."

FERC will closely monitor the networks to prevent insider tips and trading. No one will have access to advance information.

Users will have to register with BPA's System Operations group before they can claim space on the TSIN. "We have operators standing by from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. to answer questions," VanCoevinger said.

"By October, anyone who wants to use the system and reserve space can reach us 24 hours a day."

To claim space on the TSIN, dial 360-418-2578.

BPA's grid provides about 80 percent of the transmission capacity in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and western Montana. It owns nearly 14,000 miles of transmission lines.

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